
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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Author:	Wicks		
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Consultant:	Katharine Moore		

Subject: Public resources: coastal resources: Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group

SUMMARY

This bill would authorize the California Coastal Commission (Coastal Commission) to retroactively extend, for up to five years, any time limitation established for a local government to act on the Coastal Commission's suggested modifications to a land use plan amendment that would authorize approval of a 100% affordable housing development which otherwise expired, as provided; and would require the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency to convene a Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group to develop a Coastal Resilience Permitting Roadmap with recommendations for process improvements and legislative reforms to enable efficient environmental permitting of coastal resilience projects statewide, as provided.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

The Coastal Commission.

The Coastal Commission was established by voter initiative in 1972. The Legislature later made the Coastal Commission permanent through the adoption of the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Coastal Act) (Public Resources Code (PRC) §§30000 *et seq.*). The Coastal Commission plans for and regulates the use of land and water in the coastal zone (which excludes the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's jurisdiction in the San Francisco Bay).

Development activities in the coastal zone generally require a coastal development permit (CDP) issued by the Coastal Commission or by a local government with a local coastal program (LCP) certified by the Coastal Commission. A LCP is comprised of two parts – a land use plan and an implementation plan. A certified LCP can be amended and the Coastal Commission would have to approve the amendment for it to go into effect. Coastal Act policies are the standards the Coastal Commission uses to determine the permissibility of proposed developments subject to its jurisdiction.

The Venice Dell Community Housing Project

The Venice Dell Community Housing Project, developed by the nonprofit developers Venice Community Housing and Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, is a proposed 100% affordable housing project in Venice, California comprised of two mixed-use four story structures with 120 affordable housing units, space for retail and supportive services, and parking. Sixty-eight of the units are for individuals experiencing homelessness. It is proposed to be located 800 feet from Venice Beach. The project site includes two surface parking lots owned by the City of Los Angeles, and

is located in the coastal zone. According to the Los Angeles Times, the project has been in process since 2016.¹

On December 11, 2024, the Coastal Commission unanimously approved a CDP with conditions, and certified, contingent upon certain modifications, an amendment to the Venice Land Use Plan which were both required for the Venice Dell Community Housing project to be built.² The Venice LUP amendment would re-designate the necessary parcels to “Neighborhood Commercial” use with new development standards. The Coastal Commission’s required modifications to the Venice LUP amendment include correcting typographical errors and outdated language, more accurately reflecting the Venice Dell project, and preserving public access and community character.

According to the Coastal Commission, an initial CDP approval is good for two years, and an applicant may apply for an unlimited number of 2-year time extensions if not vested prior to that date. A recent regulatory change now allows CDPs for 100% affordable housing projects five years to vest, with the option of 2-year time extensions. The City of Los Angeles was required to accept the Coastal Commission’s modifications to the Venice LUP amendment within six months, but did not do so. The Coastal Commission was able to extend the deadline for up to one year pursuant to existing law. This one-time extension expired in June 2026. The CDP cannot go forward without the corresponding changes to the land use designations in the LUP amendment.

The Venice Dell Community Housing Project is controversial, and multiple lawsuits have challenged elements of its permitting. Proponents argue that the City of Los Angeles has delayed the project. In 2025, the Project received a \$42.4 million conditional award from the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). HCD has written a letter to the City expressing its concerns should the Project not proceed. According to proponents, the HCD funds can be leveraged with other sources to cover the estimated \$133 million budget for the Project, and argue that delays in the Project have “real consequences for residents in need of affordable housing.”

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)

In 1965, the McAteer-Petris Act (Government Code (GOV) §§66600 *et seq.*) established BCDC. Although created as a temporary state agency, BCDC was made permanent in 1969 following the completion of the San Francisco Bay Plan (Bay Plan), a comprehensive plan that addresses the development of the bay and shoreline. BCDC’s jurisdiction includes the San Francisco Bay and the land within 100 feet of the shoreline, as provided. Since 2008, BCDC has been the state agency responsible for leading the San Francisco Bay area’s preparedness for, and resilience to, rising sea levels, tides, and storm surge due to climate change. BCDC is required to address emerging issues and keep the Bay Plan up-to-date.

Sea Level Rise in California.

In 2024, the Ocean Protection Council released sea level rise guidance suggesting that sea levels in California will most likely rise 0.8 feet above 2000 levels by 2050 and 1.6–

¹ L.A. officials continue to stall homeless housing project in Venice, new lawsuit claims. Liam Dillon, Los Angeles Times, July 12, 2024.

² Amendment Request #LCP-5-VEN-23-0037-1.

3.1 feet by 2100. Local impacts may vary, with some locations, like Humboldt Bay, likely to see higher sea level rise. With the rise in sea level, more frequent coastal flooding and storm surge will occur, threatening communities and infrastructure along the coast, placing an estimated hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure at risk. The cost to address sea level rise is also estimated in the billions of dollars.

Planning for Sea Level Rise.

In order to ensure proactive sea level rise planning occurs in the state, SB 272 (Laird, Chapter 384, Statutes of 2023) requires local governments along the coastline, including San Francisco Bay, to develop a sea level rise plan by January 1, 2034 as part of either a LCP submitted to the Coastal Commission or a shoreline resiliency plan submitted to BCDC. Local governments with approved sea level rise plans are prioritized for funding, subject to appropriation, for the implementation of identified sea level rise adaptation strategies and recommended projects identified in their plans. The Coastal Commission and BCDC were both required to provide guidelines for preparation of sea level rise plans by December 31, 2024.

SB 272 built upon the goals established in SB 1 ((Atkins), Chapter 236, Statutes of 2021) to help coordinate and fund state efforts to prepare for sea level rise associated with climate change, among other things.

In November 2024, the Coastal Commission adopted an updated Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance. The Guidance includes guiding principles for addressing sea level rise in the coastal zone, a discussion of the best available science, step-by-step guidance for addressing sea level rise in LCPs and CDPs, including implementation of SB 272, and possible adaptation strategies, and other provisions.

In December 2024, BCDC approved guidance in order to comply with SB 272's directive.

Permitting requirements for coastal projects.

According to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, as many as 16 federal and state permitting agencies may have a role in the permitting for coastal projects.³ Federal and state agencies involved may include the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), regional water quality control boards, the Coastal Commission, BCDC, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the State Lands Commission, and others with overlapping, but distinct, jurisdictions.

Permit streamlining.

Given the complexity of navigating permitting from multiple agencies, in 2024 the Assembly investigated permitting in California through its Select Committee on Permitting Reform. In its final report, the Select Committee identified several best practices, including frontloading planning, providing a clear and straightforward process, maximizing consistency across permitting agencies, and pre-determining mitigation measures.

³ The number of agencies involved is from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's North-Central California Coastal Sediment Coordination Committee's Efficient Permitting Roadmap.

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT).

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, with support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, convenes dedicated staff from six permitting agencies (USACOE, USFWS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, CDFW, and BCDC) to improve the permitting process for multi-benefit habitat restoration projects and associated flood management and public access infrastructure. The resulting coordinating group, BRRIT, uses pre-application consultation to accelerate the permitting process. Of the 11 fully-permitted projects identified in the BRRIT 2025 Annual Report, 100% had all permits issued within the target timeline. Where some partially-permitted projects have not met the target timeline, this has been due to late changes to conditions (for example, changes to listed species under the federal Endangered Species Act).

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Coastal Act which:
 - a) Establishes the Coastal Commission in the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA).
 - b) Requires each local government in the coastal zone to prepare a LCP for that portion of the coastal zone within its jurisdiction, as provided. Requires the precise content of each LCP to be determined by the local government in full consultation with the Coastal Commission and full public participation. (PRC §30500)
 - i) Each LCP includes a land use plan and an implementation plan. The land use plan contains policies and the implementation plan includes accompanying measures to implement the land use plan, including zoning ordinances, and zoning district maps, among others.
 - c) Authorizes the Coastal Commission for good cause to extend for up to one year any time limitation established related to the preparation, approval, and certification of a LCP. (PRC §30517)
 - d) Provides for the planning and regulation of development within the coastal zone.
 - i) A person planning to perform or undertake any development in the coastal zone is required to obtain a CDP from the Coastal Commission or local government enforcing a LCP certified by the Coastal Commission.
 - ii) The coastal zone means the coastal land and waters of California, and includes the lands that extend inland generally 1,000 yards from the mean high tide line, as specified, with various exceptions including the San Francisco Bay.
 - iii) Development means, among other things, the placement or erection of any solid material or structure on land or in water.
 - e) Requires the Coastal Commission to take into account the effects of sea level rise in coastal resources planning and management policies and activities in

order to identify, assess, and, to the extent feasible, avoid and mitigate the adverse effects of sea level rise. (PRC §30270)

- 2) Establishes BCDC: (GOV §§66600 *et seq.*)
 - a) BCDC, among other things, is required to address emerging issues and to implement comprehensive plans for the preservation and protection of San Francisco Bay and the Suisun Marsh, including preparedness for, and resilience to, rising sea levels, tides, and storm surge due to climate change. BCDC has adopted the San Francisco Bay Plan, which is a comprehensive plan that addresses the development of the bay and shoreline.
- 3) Requires a local government lying within the coastal zone or the San Francisco Bay shoreline to develop a sea level rise plan as part of a LCP or subregional San Francisco Bay shoreline resiliency plan subject to BCDC's approval.
 - a) Requires the sea level rise plan to include the use of best available science, a vulnerability assessment to ensure equity for at-risk communities, sea level rise adaptation strategies and recommended projects, identification of lead planning and implementation agencies, and a timeline for updates to the plan. Requires that the timeline include economic impact analyses of costs to critical public infrastructure and recommended approaches for implementing sea level rise, as provided.
 - b) Requires local governments to comply by January 1, 2034.
 - c) Requires the Coastal Commission and BCDC to establish guidelines for the sea level rise plan, as provided.
 - d) Requires local governments that receive Coastal Commission or BCDC approval of their sea level rise plans be prioritized for funding, subject to appropriation, for the implementation of sea level rise adaptation strategies and recommended projects in the approval sea level rise plan. (PRC §§30985, 30985.2, 30985.5)

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would:

- 1) In addition to existing law authorizing the Coastal Commission to extend certain deadlines by up to one year, authorize the Coastal Commission to retroactively extend for up to five years any time limitation established for a local government to act on the Coastal Commission's suggested modifications to a land use plan amendment that would authorize approval of a 100% affordable housing development which otherwise expired between January 1, 2025 and December 1, 2026, as provided.
- 2) Require the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA Secretary) to develop a Coastal Resilience Permitting Roadmap (Roadmap) with recommendations for process improvements and legislative reforms to enable efficient and timely delivery of environmental approvals by July 1, 2028.

- 3) Require the CNRA Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), to convene a Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group (Working Group) for the purpose of developing the Roadmap.
- 4) Require that the Working Group consist of representatives from federal, state, and local agencies, including but not limited to:
 - a) The Coastal Commission;
 - b) CalEPA;
 - c) The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and regional water quality control board representatives (Regional Water Boards);
 - d) CDFW;
 - e) The Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation;
 - f) CNRA;
 - g) The Ocean Protection Council;
 - h) BCDC;
 - i) The State Coastal Conservancy;
 - j) The State Lands Commission; and
 - k) The State Office of Historic Preservation.
- 5) Require that the Roadmap include, at minimum, recommendations that address:
 - a) Administrative reforms that can be implemented by state agencies within their existing authority to improve permit issuance timelines, including, among others:
 - i) Improving efficiency in the process for agencies to determine and communicate that permit applications are complete including through the use of tools, as provided; and
 - ii) Unified applications with a predictable sequence and timeline for review;
 - b) A state process to align agency mitigation requirements and enable in-lieu fees or advance mitigation through which applicants can contribute funding to eligible restoration or mitigation initiatives, as provided;
 - c) Legislative reforms that have the greatest potential to further accelerate permitting for projects that increase coastal resilience, with a focus on current legislative requirements, as provided;
 - d) A coastal resilience project pilot program and any required legislative authorizations, if needed, to test alternative approaches;

- e) An evaluation of whether consolidated coastal resilience permits, similar to those provided for offshore wind, would facilitate timely permits; and
 - f) Workforce assessment and funding options for regulatory staffing positions and as-needed permitting support contracts to supplement staff, as provided.
- 6) Require, on or before April 1, 2027, the CNRA Secretary, in collaboration with the Coastal Commission, BCDC, CDFW, and the State Water Board and Regional Water Boards, convene a Coastal Resilience Permit Advisory Group (Advisory Group), consisting of representatives from at least the following:
- a) State Department of Transportation, State Coastal Conservancy, and other relevant state agencies that seek permits for projects in coastal areas;
 - b) Local governments required to update their LCPs for sea level rise;
 - c) California ports;
 - d) Local transportation agencies and wastewater treatment agencies, as specified;
 - e) California Native American tribes that are on the contact list administered and maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission; and
 - f) Other members of the public, including businesses, home and affordable housing builders, commercial and recreational fishers, environmental organizations, and environmental justice organizations.
- 7) Require the CNRA Secretary, in consultation with the Coastal Commission, BCDC, CDFW, the State Water Board and the Regional Water Boards to conduct a series of public workshops with the Advisory Group or subgroups thereof to:
- a) Solicit feedback regarding challenges with existing permitting processes; and
 - b) Review and seek comment on draft reform proposals from the Working Group's Roadmap.
- 8) Provide that a project alternative should be developed that uses existing natural features and ecosystem processes, or the restoration of natural features and ecosystem processes, to meet a project's goals when developing infrastructure to address adaptation, where feasible.
- 9) Define "coastal resilience project" as a project that maintains, protects, restores, or enables coastal ecosystems, infrastructure, or communities to withstand and adapt to sea level rise and other natural hazards amplified by climate change.
- 10) Make relevant legislative findings and declarations.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, "AB 2051 directs the Natural Resources Agency to convene a Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group who will meet to develop a Roadmap for

projects proposed along California's coast and in the San Francisco Bay. Under current law, a project sponsor on the coast may need to secure more than ten separate permits from state, federal, and local agencies. Decades worth of well-meaning permitting processes are overlaid on top of one another, and it is too expensive and time-consuming to move with the speed and cost efficiency our coastline is going to need to adapt to sea-level rise and an altered climate. The bill also gives the Coastal Commission the ability to extend, under narrow conditions, the expiration date of suggested modifications to a local land use plan that would facilitate the approval of a 100% affordable housing development."

In a joint sign-on letter in support, Venice Community Housing, among others, write, "The California Department of Housing and Community Development has awarded Venice Dell \$42.5 million in funds, which requires a construction start by spring 2028. As the remaining hurdles to the project get stripped away, allowing the Coastal Commission to renew its approval of the project will save months of repeat work, enable the project to meet its funding deadline, and allow hundreds of people to have a safe and affordable home."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received

COMMENTS

Rule 29.10b. This bill was substantially amended on the Senate floor and returned to this Committee for rehearing under Senate Rule 29.10b. Under that rule, the Committee cannot amend the bill, but can make recommendations for amendments to the author.

In its prior form which included just the development of the Roadmap, this bill passed this Committee on a unanimous 7 – 0 vote at the July 1, 2026, hearing.

Homelessness in California. According to the Senate Housing Committee,

According to the most recent point in time (PIT) count, 187,084 people were experiencing homelessness in California – representing 24% of the nation's homeless population. Two-thirds of the homeless population in California is unsheltered. Over half (51%) of all unsheltered people in the United States were in California. A lack of affordable housing is the biggest contributor to homelessness. As housing costs continue to rise, rent becomes less affordable for lower-income households, who are forced to live beyond their means (paying more than 30% of income on housing costs) or are pushed out of their homes, leading to rapid increases in homelessness. Variation in rates of homelessness cannot be explained by variation in rates of individual factors such as poverty or mental illness; conversely, cities with higher rent and lower rental vacancy rates (i.e. tighter housing markets) are directly linked to higher per capita rates of homelessness.

The lack of affordable housing plays a significant role in causing individuals to become homeless and creates obstacles for individuals experiencing homeless to transition into stable housing. The need for, and

costs of, housing have consistently outpaced the development of affordable housing for over 30 years. As of 2022, working at the minimum wage of \$15/hour, a renter has to work 83 hours each week to afford a modest one-bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent in California. The lack of supply is the primary factor underlying California's housing crunch. To keep up with demand, HCD estimates that California must plan for the development of more than 2.5 million homes over the next eight years, and no less than one million of those homes must meet the needs of lower income households (more than 640,000 very low-income and 385,000 low-income units are needed). For decades, not enough housing was constructed to meet need, resulting in a severe undersupply of housing. New construction of housing, both single family homes and apartments, continues to lag behind historical average, and lags further behind the number of new units needed to meet housing demand.

The Venice Dell project, as proposed, includes housing and supportive services for those experiencing homelessness, and housing for those with low incomes and extremely low incomes.

Roadmap: Benefits of early agency coordination. As noted in the background, the potential impacts of sea level rise on the state's coastline are anticipated to be extensive with significant damage, loss, and expense anticipated to public safety, infrastructure, and the environment, among other things. Facilitating early discussions and coordination among project proponents and permitting agencies can help identify challenges before a permit from one agency becomes delayed with cascading impacts to subsequent approvals (in other words, certain agency permitting decisions rely upon permits issued by other agencies).

The BRITT, described in the background, appears to be an effective model for coordination among agencies to spur permitting for certain projects. Additionally, both BCDC and the Coastal Commission have accelerated permitting pathways for projects with a nominal impact on the surrounding environment.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS: none

SUPPORT

Bay Area Council (co-source)
Bay Planning Coalition (co-source)
Abundant Housing LA
ACT-LA
AltaSea
Association of California Cities – Orange County
California Council for Affordable Housing
California Democratic Party Rural Caucus
California Shore & Beach Preservation Association
California State Association of Counties
CD 11 Coalition for Human Rights
City and County of San Francisco

City of Los Alamitos
City of Oceanside
City of Port Hueneme
City of San Rafael
City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County
Coastal Quest
County of Los Angeles
County of Marin
County of Monterey
County of Orange
Downtown Women's Center
East Bay Dischargers Authority
East Bay Regional Park District
ECONcrete
Enterprise Community Partners
Filoli
Ground Game LA
Hollywood Community Housing Corporation
Homes & Hope
Housing Action Coalition
Indivisible South Bay LA
Inner City Law Center
Kiewit Infrastructure West Company
LA Forward
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
Long Beach Forward
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
Los Angeles County Young Democrats
Mar Vista Voice
Marin Community Foundation
McFadden Finch Holdings Company
Mental Health Advocacy Services
National Alliance to End Homelessness
Neighborhood Legal Services
One Shoreline
Orange County Council of Governments
Orange County Transportation Authority
Port of Redwood City
Port of San Francisco
Public Advocates
Public Counsel
Public Interest Law Project
Safe Place For Youth
SAJE
San Francisco Bay Ferry
San Francisco International Airport
Santa Clara Valley Water District
Self-Help Enterprises
Senior Advocacy Network
Social Justice Learning Institute

South Bay Housing Crisis Working Group
Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing
Supportive Housing Alliance
The Exploratorium
The Honorable Todd Gloria, Mayor, City of San Diego
The Nature Conservancy
T.R.U.S.T. South LA
Union Station Homeless Services
USC Gould School of Law Housing Law and Policy Clinic
Venice Community Housing
Wareham Development
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Westside Young Democrats
WILDCOAST
Women Organizing Resources, Knowledge and Services

Dozens of individuals

OPPOSITION

None received

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